



The Small College

The Small College Talks Back, An Intimate Appraisal. By William W. Hall, Jr. New York, Richard R. Smith, 1951. 214p. \$3.00.

President Hall's avowed purpose is "to throw a little light on an important and traditional segment of higher education in America by use of the case method. From the events in the life of one college during the administration of a single president may be drawn lessons of much wider applicability. . . ." This book, then, attempts to be nothing more nor less than a highly personal account of the conduct of the president's office at the College of Idaho from 1939 to 1948. Problems are frankly stated and reasoned. The answers are not all here, for no college president has all the answers. President Hall offers the reading public the opportunity to accompany him in the conduct of his responsibilities and to draw its own conclusions on how these were discharged. This is done with frankness, vigor and literary ability. Educator and layman alike will have difficulty in putting this volume down, once begun. What a refreshing change from most professional literature!

The problems of most colleges and many universities are all here. Faculty salaries were, as in other places, still at a mid-thirties low, and a certain amount of stagnation had set in. How could one attract scholarly young men with real teaching ability to this small institution in the sagebrush? The endowment was insignificant and the draft soon cut deeply into enrolment. How, to quote a chapter heading, make "Two and Two Make Six"?

The college is situated in an emerging area, coming out from the raw and rugged conditions of its pioneering past and into a settling existence with new industries and a culture and personality all its own. Into this the college must fit. The college must blaze its own path to meet the needs of its area and perform a function different from the state university, its great competitor. How vocational education was finally ruled out and the liberal arts firmly established as policy to the satisfaction of trustees and alumni is an interesting story with lessons for all educators.

Much of the work of a college president is, of course, in raising funds and in public relations. Here the characters are drawn sharp and clear, to the discomfort of some and glory of others. The trustees, individually and collectively, are not excepted. The member whose chief contribution to the college is termed "opening the meeting with prayer and seconding the motions," exists perhaps on other boards but does not expect such prominent recognition.

A prominent and distressing lack is the scant attention given to the college library.

Librarians of liberal arts colleges will find this volume highly useful for its light on the problems faced in the president's office. They will have difficulty in reading the book because, judging from personal experience, their wives and secretaries will refuse to give it up. It belongs, for all its deceptive spontaneity and charm, in any collection on higher education. Would that some librarian had the wit and time to produce a similar book on his own work.—Arthur T. Hamlin, *Association of College and Reference Libraries*.

Bibliography in an Age of Science

Bibliography in an Age of Science. By Louis N. Ridenour, Ralph R. Shaw and Albert G. Hill. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1951. 90p. \$2.50.

Librarians reading these second Windsor lectures will have the eerie sensation of moving along the thin knife edge of the barely known into the realm of science fiction—science fiction set in the library. Librarian

readers will be uneasy unless they have prepared themselves by acquiring a bowing acquaintance with Berkeley's *Giant Brains* and Wiener's *Cybernetics*. The statements made and implications drawn by Dean Ridenour, a physicist and radar expert, and by Professor Hill, another physicist and one-time Bell telephone engineer, out-fantasy Frederick Keppel's "Looking Forward, A

Fantasy" in the 1939 ALA symposium, *The Library of Tomorrow*. Ralph Shaw's lecture is comfortably more familiar as to content, but even he verges on the unfamiliar world of binary digits and electronic pencils.

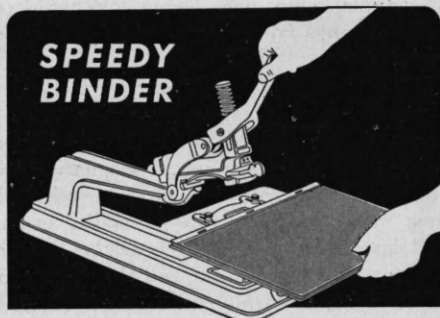
Ridenour points out that the present-day problems of acquisition, storage and indexing are the product of modern technology which libraries have failed to exploit in seeking solutions. In Ridenour's view the slowing down of libraries' growth rate, in the face of increasing materials and increasing demands, is a sign of inadequate technique. The costs of cataloging and storage by current techniques are approaching society's limit of acceptance. To better the situation Ridenour proposes that library problems be studied from the standpoint of operational research, a technique brought to a high order of development during the war and described in *Methods of Operations Research* by P. M. Morse and G. E. Kimball. Through this mode of attack Hill would add that of the "systems engineer," a concept borrowed from the Bell telephone systems, whose fundamental problems are not dissimilar to those of libraries. A telephone system involves the interrelation of a theoretically infinite number of telephone instruments whose switching problems increase as a square of the number of instruments. If one assumes that the objective of libraries is to put into the hands of its clients appropriate units of information, which are interrelated with respect to the clients' need for them, the significance of this advice is apparent. Both systems, engineering and the methods employed by operational analysis, are wholly alien to the substance of library education and usually to the background of librarians. It seems likely, therefore, that libraries will be the victim of a cultural age unless the application of these techniques is stimulated by the application of more money than libraries are accustomed to secure from their normal sources.

Shaw's lecture brings us closer to reality; it is a realistic evaluative resumé of mechanical, electrical and electronic devices for storing, sorting and reproducing bibliographic materials. Since most of these devices were developed for other than bibliographical use (except the Rapid Selector) none is well adapted to library uses but all are predictive of more appropriate devices which might be

evolved. A valuable axiom to be kept in mind when considering the use of novel equipment in libraries can be derived from Shaw's remarks: "The productive speed of a process involving a very rapid machine can be no greater than the speed of the slowest portion of the process."

Hill reports briefly on the MIT program in scientific age to learning.

It is fashionable to propose projects for the attention of the Ford Foundation. If one agrees with the predictions of the authors, it would be most appropriate to urge this newest member of the foundation family to create a large subsidiary to study the problems inherent in the reproduction, storage and dissemination of the records of human thought and to develop methods and devices for solving them. Probably it is only by such a well-financed and coordinated attack that library technology can be brought quickly enough to a proper level to prevent severe damage to the library in its present institutional role.—*Donald Coney, University of California Library, Berkeley.*



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